

AHCCCS Provider Response to SAMHSA Fidelity Review

Complete the following form in response to the SAMHSA fidelity review process conducted by AHCCCS staff.

Date: 08-27-2018

Name and contact information of provider:
CHEEERS Recovery Center
1950 W Heatherbrae Drive Suite 2
Phoenix, AZ 85015

Response to the Fidelity Review, submitted by
Robert Wright, Member Representative, CHEEERS Board of Directors
Sheree Lee, Member Representative, CHEEERS Board of Directors
Kimberly Craig, CEO, President

Type of evidence-based practice provider (select one):

	Permanent Supportive Housing
	Supported Employment
X	Consumer Operated Services
	Assertive Community Treatment

What was your experience with the fidelity review conducted at your agency?

CHEEERS as an organization welcomes the fidelity review each year as an opportunity to review the standards and continue to improve programming and operations. Staff members who participated in the interviews reported that they appreciated the opportunity to participate and believed the process was “re-energizing” as they reflected on program progress and expansion, however; some of the members that participated reported a different experience and shared disappointment. Immediately and the days following the member interviews, more than one of the eight members who participated expressed concern that the interview and input from some of the members was “negative, inappropriate and not true”. One member reporting feeling embarrassed that peers had “complained and talked about things that happened 2 years ago”. Same member reported that she did not feel she could share or correct information due to general feeling “no one wanted to hear it”. Members were assured at the time that reviewers would be able to sort through the input and apply the standards and that we appreciated their participation.

Upon receiving the report and sharing the results with our members not only those that participated in the interview, but also members that did not share feelings that the report contained information that was false or misrepresented what actually happens at CHEEERS. Members expressed feeling personally upset about the report, stating it “doesn’t show all the progress we have made and how we have grown.”

Overall the score would indicate that CHEEERS consistently meets the standards in all the domains, however; staff and members providing feedback believe that some of the comments made by members or contained in the report warrant clarification and response.

The report was reviewed at the agencies Board of Directors meeting in August with member representatives sharing their experience and disagreement with the report. As a result of this discussion it was formally decided that member input would be included in the response with identification of those individuals who represent CHEEERS members on the BOD and member Advisory Council.

CHEEERS leadership, staff as well as our members wish to acknowledge that the members who are invited to participate in the review process are selected internally by the organization. CHEEERS purposefully attempts to provide a diverse group of individuals for the fidelity process, believing it will provide the best feedback and a balanced report. Invitations were extended to those who are activity involved in programing, operations and governance, along with members who may be considered moderately to minimally involved. Due to unforeseeable circumstances 5 members, who would be considered very engaged in programming, operations and governance, were not able to participate at the last minute. We believe this contributed to what we deem as inaccurate or a misrepresentation.

What was most helpful about the fidelity review process for your agency?

As stated CHEEERS welcomes the fidelity review process each year and our members (some who have participated many times, over many years) additionally welcome and look forward to the review each year. We use the process as an opportunity to review the key elements and functions of our Consumer Operated Program as well as educate our members on the organizations standards and practice. We are committed to ensuring our agency, program and operations truly embody the principles of Consumer Operated Service Program. From a leadership standpoint, we are pleased that our members are interested in the review process and feel compelled to dispute or clarify areas of the report they feel are inaccurate. We consider this evidence that we are successful in our intention to empower individuals to have a voice in this community we call CHEEERS.

What suggestions would improve the review process?

While we recognize the report included what may have been member report, input and or perceptions, we would have welcomed the opportunity to provide clarification on some of the key areas. We also feel that the body of the report and the key recommendations contained statements that implied or suggested deficiency or were stated as fact, rather than a recommendation. Members also wonder if some of the suggestions were reviewer suggestions or if the members had made them.

For example:

“Seek Member input prior to decisions”, could be perceived by some or imply that we do not or did not seek member input relating to program changes.

CHEEERS would have accepted, “Ensure member input is gathered” as a quality improvement measure, verses what we interpret as suggesting deficiency with supporting evidence. (Which we know would be disputed by the majority of members at CHEEERS.)

This was present throughout the report findings and summary.

The score is calculated as 203, however when we total the score we find a score of 204. We recognize the score is high and we appreciate the overall acknowledgement that CHEEERS does indeed operate a program and agency consistent with the Fidelity Measures. Members feel that the score should have been higher.

Comments from your agency regarding the findings of the review and/or the fidelity report:

CHEEERS and or members submit the following comments in regards to the key recommendations and to the additional statements made throughout the report.

Summary & Key Recommendations**The following are some areas that will benefit from focused quality improvement:***Recommendation #1*

- *Seek member input in advance of potential changes to center operations.*

Other related comments in body of the report:

- *When members make suggestions, update them on the status of their suggestions.*
- *Some members interviewed expressed disappointment in changes to hours of operation and did not feel they were adequately involved in the decision.*
- *Solicit member input to potential changes to the hours of operation to ensure hours conform to the hours most needed by members.*
- *Some centers use an all-member voting process when considering changes to their operations.*

Response:

CHEEERS members wish to clarify that members at CHEEERS were provided multiple and many opportunities to provide input regarding the closing of the program on Sundays.

Members also state they believe everyone is provided information about *all decisions* impacting operations.

Members expressed disappointment with the suggestion that member input was not gathered, sharing some members chose to not to engage in programing, involve themselves in community discussions, suggestions or advisory council meetings, but later complain about things.

Our members wish to make the following points:

- Member suggestions prompted the consideration of closing the program on Sundays. (based on their request to have extended evening hours and Let's Dish programming added to the schedule.)
- Staff, board members and leadership provided opportunities to discuss the pros and cons of closing the program in advance.
- Members express disagreement that having a "Vote" on such matters would not be an effective way to determine what was best for the agency. (CHEEERS uses a consensus building model of decision-making providing opportunity for all to provide input, gain understanding of pros and cons, and then as a collective group decide to support a decision or direction, understanding that having 100 % agreement with any decision in a program serving individuals with diverse needs is unrealistic.)
- Program staff, leadership, peer elected member advisory council members and the CEO attended the all participant meeting and the advisory council meeting, to discuss the proposed program change well in advance. In addition one of the members that serve on the Board of Directors reached out to the very few members that attended programming on Sundays to discuss impact and get feedback. There was an overwhelming majority of members that expressed support of closing on Sundays, noting transportation was not available to them on those days; that members should use the opportunity to develop outside support; it was not a good use of staff time, and also deciding they would assist any peers who attended Sundays with community resources as needed. Members additionally expressed that the staff at CHEEERS (who they noted are also peers) would then be able to enjoy family time, which they also viewed as a positive outcome as a result of the decision to close.

2. Recommendation :

- *Seek input from all members regarding the distribution of meals or other related member concerns, as they arise.*
- *Some members expressed their frustration that if they participate in groups before lunch, when groups end, the lines for lunch are long and sometimes there is no food available after other members, who may not have attended group before lunch, receive their meals.*

Response :

CHEEERS and our members wish to correct or provide further clarification regarding the statement that sometimes there is no food available after other members, who may not have attended group before lunch, receive their meals. At no time has CHEEERS ever run out of food, and all members or persons who are at CHEEERS during the meal time hours receive a meal regardless of their attendance of programming.

In the event that CHEEERS has a higher census than anticipated on any given day during meal time, and the meal that was prepared as the main course for the day, (example "Chicken Tacos") was not enough to feed everyone in line, an alternate meal is and always has been provided to the individual. Members state that "no one is turned away or going without, we have seen staff go out of their way to make sure everyone is fed."

CHEEERS will continue to ensure we consider and seek member input on this issue. We will also continue to encourage, communicate and model a familial approach and atmosphere to meal time at CHEEERS. Given that we may have as many as 100 members present for any given meal, our members wish to acknowledge that many of our peers will often assist those with disabling conditions to receive their meal before taking their own. Members shared that staff does a good job of making sure everyone is fed and "those with health conditions or who are not able to stand in line, are the only ones fed first". An example was provided that a member's "blood sugar was low one day so she moved to the front of the line". Members are also encouraged to consider that a person's transportation or circumstances that may have been beyond their control that consequently interfered with their group attendance in the morning should not then result in taking the end of the line for meals.

3. Recommendation :

Examine how staff and members view the expression of spiritual beliefs. Review the available opportunities for members to freely share beliefs (e.g., possibly offering the spirituality class on both the weekend and weekdays, when there are more transportation options) and ensure staff offer consistent messaging to members regarding the agency philosophy.

- *There was dissonance between staff and member perceptions allowing for the sharing of spiritual beliefs. Members reported the sharing of spiritual beliefs was generally discouraged, but staff reported they welcome the sharing of spiritual beliefs.*
- *Staff and members affirmed there is a spirituality group offered on Saturdays. Members noted that there are fewer transportation options on the weekend.*

- *One member reported they share **religious** beliefs with a specific other member because they felt it would be acceptable. One member noted that there was a concern that the sharing of beliefs could result in an argument, and another cited their concern with other members proselytizing their beliefs.*
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Response :

Quality review and monitoring of our documentation and services strongly supports and suggests that spirituality and beliefs are freely and frequently discussed, shared and encouraged at CHEEERS. Members wish to point out that Religious beliefs appears to have been (and as recalled by a member who was present for the interview) the topic of conversation during the interview. In which case it is very possible that a member would be redirected if any expression of religious beliefs served to infringe upon the religious freedom of others, serve to belittle, encourage hate or encourage alienation of a member. (It appears that our members may have been attempting to explain the difference and based on experiences they have encountered) In programs where spirituality and beliefs are shared openly it's not uncommon for there to be conflict, disagreement or opposing belief systems as well as discussions of religion, rituals and practice. We seek to model acceptance, inclusion and guidance to our members and will as recommended continue these conversations. Group schedules and content is adjusted and revised based on member input. Members wish to share from their perspective, "all groups and services at CHEEERS contain an element of spirituality and exploration of beliefs" .

4. Recommendation

Encourage members to participate in job readiness activities and consider adding or training additional staff to facilitate job readiness activities. It may be useful to track member participation by specific group or activity. Events with lower than anticipated attendance can be evaluated to determine if enhancements are needed related to engagement, curriculum, or supports.

Response:

CHEEERS will look further into the needs of our members that may have contributed to this suggestion. Events, programming and services offered at CHEEERS are evaluated and revised based on participant input, peer staff evaluation of response to materials and attendance. Members frequently provide suggestions relating to group topic as well as recreational events. CHEEERS recently added (shown on the tour) a Resource Job Readiness room to our campus making 6 more computers available for these sorts of job readiness activities. We have programming on our schedule now such as Computer Tutor, Pathway to Employment, Peer Certification Training, and Pre GED classes which are all job readiness training with assigned staff members. It's unclear to us if this was a suggestion made by reviewers or if our members are expressing a desire for more job readiness or perhaps understanding what activities have been added to increase job readiness activities at CHEEERS. We will follow up and evaluate this area further. Note: Job readiness programming is often included as part of our supervised day programming services, so individual group attendance would not be reflected in the additional data requested by the auditors regarding service utilization.

Additional Comment in Report :

Seek to inform members of consciousness raising activities in their local and broader peer communities, including ways they can directly connect with, or contribute, to the member community outside of CHEEERS.

- *Consciousness Raising-- Information about events in the community is posted on an events board, the center social media page, and newsletter. CHEEERS' members and staff participate in forums for consciousness raising such as attending the RBHA Connections Conference, the NAMI walk, and activities with other peer run organization (e.g., kickball). Some staff reported they participated in local conferences. On the agency website and social media page, there are references to local events and staff participation in conferences outside of Arizona. However, some members interviewed reported they don't regularly receive information about the broader peer movement outside of CHEEERS.*

Response:

CHEEERS will work to ensure our members are aware of larger peer communities and we will better identify that event for our member when they occur. Noted that the wording of this comment may indicate it was intended as a formal recommendation which may account for the point discrepancy in the final score sheet.